



Mayor Ron Gonzales
Council Member Forrest Williams
Coyote Valley Specific Plan Task Force Members
801 North First Street, Rm. 600
San Jose, CA 95110

June 16, 2005

Mayor Gonzales, Council Member Williams and Task Force Members,

The Sierra Club believes that poorly planned development threatens our environment, our health, and our quality of life in numerous ways. Sprawl pollutes our air and water, increases traffic on our neighborhood streets and highways, and wastes tax money. On this latter note, it is especially important to thoughtfully plan development so that it doesn't pull economic resources away from existing communities. The planning effort to develop Coyote Valley should be sensitive to how it will impact other parts of San Jose in addition to ensuring that the specific plan reflects a true smart growth community.

Recently a memorandum was circulated by the Mayor and Council member Williams that suggests updating the City Council's 2002 guidelines is necessary and recommends specific changes. While there are aspects we can support there are three recommendations that cause great concern. These are two changes to the City's General Plan development triggers and the concept "phasing of the willing". Together these three changes will encourage sprawl in Coyote Valley and create a competition for resources between Coyote Valley and other areas of San Jose.

The idea of development in Coyote Valley under conditions of "phasing of the willing" is contradictory to the goal of smart growth and the expectation that the CVSP will provide "detailed direction for development". This approach will undermine the City's ability to ensure that development will unfold in a manner that is consistent with the specific plan vision. The financing strategy should be approached as one of the key mechanisms for guaranteeing that Coyote Valley will be built out as the urban design approach envisions: "a sustainable, transit-oriented, walkable community, containing a mix of uses that is efficient in its land use". It has long been held that the first phase of development should be around the lake area and eventually spread out as needed.

The General Plan's "development triggers" attempt to ensure that (a) development within the city occurs only when the City is fiscally ready, (b) development occurs only when actually necessary, and (c) development proceeds in a way that balances jobs with housing. We consider the General Plan triggers to be, if anything, too lenient in allowing development to proceed. The two proposed GP trigger changes are especially problematic

in the context of “phasing of the willing”. Allowing development to occur in subregions under conditions of a two-for-one jobs-housing ratio is not consistent with achieving the CVSP vision. Furthermore, it is important for a thorough economic analysis to occur prior to making changes to the service-level triggers in the GP. It is the responsibility of the Task Force and the City Council to ensure that development in Coyote Valley occurs only when appropriate and in a manner that guarantees the vision set forth by the Council in 2002.

The Sierra Club objects to any changes to the City’s General Plan which encourage sprawl and puts the city at financial risk. We object to any policy changes which prohibit smart development in Coyote Valley. We strongly urge the Task Force and City Council to evaluate the recommendations in the memorandum with a critical eye. There is great pressure to commence development as soon as possible given the Housing Group’s interest in seeing a return on their investment in the planning process. However, Coyote Valley is a resource for San Jose, not a liability. It should be protected from bad decisions and we rely on the Task Force and the City Council to assure the community and its environment’s long-term interest.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Melissa Hippard". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large, stylized 'M' and 'H'.

Melissa Hippard, Chapter Director

CC: Linda Lezotte
Cindy Chavez
Chuck Reed
Nora Campos
Ken Yeager
David Cortese
Judy Chirco
Nancy Pyle